

2.0 PROJECT NEED AND DESCRIPTION

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Over the past five years, over 1,200 accidents have been reported in the project area. Over 34 percent of the accidents have involved injuries or death. A total of 20 fatalities occurred in the project area, with ten on U.S. 301 south of the C&D Canal. Several roadway segments on U.S. 301/SR 896 are on the Department's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) list.

U.S. 301 currently operates as a regional truck route, bypassing the congestion and tolls of the I-95 corridor from Richmond, Virginia, to Wilmington, Delaware. As a result, U.S. 301 carries a high ratio of trucks. The mix of trucks with local traffic has affected roadway capacity, operations, and safety.

Significant population and housing growth in the area south of the C&D Canal between the Delaware-Maryland border and the SR 1/U.S. 13 corridor, coupled with increases in through and seasonal traffic, has resulted in worsened traffic congestion and decreased safety on the existing roadway system. Projections for continued significant growth forebode an ever-worsening situation in one of Delaware's most rapidly developing areas. At the same time, infrastructure improvements have failed to keep pace with development. Many of the major roadways in southern New Castle County are projected to operate at or below acceptable levels of service.

To meet the project needs, a range of alternatives both off and on alignment is currently being developed. These alternatives involve a combination of options, including: construction on the existing U.S. 301 alignment; construction of a north-south corridor known as the "Ridge Alternative" to the west of the existing U.S. 301; and construction of an east-west connector between Summit Ridge Road (U.S. 301/SR 896) and SR 1 to the east.